media reports about irregular recruitment of ex-Servicemen from India for security related duties in Iraq.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Several steps have been taken to regulate emigration to Iraq which include, *inter alia*, imposing of a complete ban on emigration clearance to Iraq w.e.f. 15.04.2004 and temporary suspension of emigration clearance to ex-Servicemen for deployment as security guards or for other security related duties in Jordan, Kuwait and UAE.

(e) As per information collected so far, approximately 5042 Indians had entered Iraq, legally and illegally, out of which 11 reportedly died there.

Indo-Bangladesh joint operation to detect rebel camps

*156. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government of Bangladesh had turned down India's request for conducting joint operations to detect rebel camps and hunt down insurgents using that country as a base to carry on violence in North-Eastern States;

(b) if so, on what grounds; and

(c) Governments reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Meeting of Foreign Minister with Sri Lankan Counter Part

*157. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he met recently his Sri Lankan counter part in New Delhi;

(b) if so, the points discussed; and

(c) the action taken on the suggestions made in the meeting?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar had a meeting with the External Affairs Minister in New Delhi on 31st May, 2004. During the meeting, the Foreign Minister briefed the External Affairs Minister on the status of the peace

process in Sri Lanka and the efforts being made by the Government of Sri Lanka for its resumption. Bilateral cooperation in various sectors was discussed by the Ministers in the areas of trade and comprehensive economic partnership, defence, power, ferry services between the two countries and exchanges between parliamentarians. Regional and global issues of mutual interest were also discussed. The two governments continue to be in touch with regard to the progress made on the issues discussed.

Minimum export price for coir products

*158. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN:
SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI:

Will the Minister of AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Coir Board has withdrawn the Minimum Export Price (MEP) for coir products;

(b) if so, whether Government have evaluated the adverse impact of this decision on the small scale coir manufacturing sector alogwith the details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to reintroduce the MEP and Purchase Price Export Scheme; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES (SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir. The MEP has been withdrawn by the Ministry of Textiles (nodal Ministry) with effect from 9th Arpil, 2002 on the recommendation of this Ministry. As the Minimum Export Price on Coir and Coir Products stood withdrawn, the Purchase Price Enforcement (Scheme) had lost its relevance and was, therefore, withdrawn.

(b) No, Sir. The Government have not conducted any evaluation in this regard. However, after the removal of MEP, there has been an overall increase in exports, both in terms of value and in terms of quantity.

(c) and (d) The decision to abolish Minimum Export Price (MEP) was taken in the larger interest of the coir industry after due consideration of various issues involved. There is no proposal under consideration of the Government to either reintroduce Minimum Export Price on coir and coir products or the Purchase Price Enforcement Scheme.